

Sulphur Springs ISD

2020-2021 Back-to-School FAQ

Last Updated: July 24, 2020

General Information

1. What options will my student have for the fall?

Sulphur Springs will offer two options for attending school this fall:

- a. SSISD Virtual Learning Academy – Remote/At-Home Instruction
- b. Traditional At-School Learning – Students Attend School on Campus

2. When/How will I choose an option for my student?

Beginning July 24th, parents/guardians in the Skyward directory will receive an e-mail from SSISD asking them to make a commitment for their child(ren) to choose either at-school instruction or the Virtual Learning Academy (at-home instruction) for the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year. In order for SSISD to finalize staffing requirements, we need the commitment to be made by August 4, 2020.

3. Whether we choose the Virtual Academy or face-to-face instruction, can we switch during the school year?

Students will be expected to learn in their chosen setting (in-person or at-home) through at least a 9-week grading period in order to limit scheduling and staffing complexities. We understand that circumstances could change for our families throughout the semester, and exceptions will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

4. When will we return to school?

The first day of school for students is September 1, 2020. Teachers and staff will return on August 6, 2020 for professional development

5. Are we changing our school calendar?

Yes, we changed the calendar so that students' first day of class will now be September 1, 2020.

6. Will there be fall athletics, band, academic UIL etc.?

Yes, we expect so. We've gotten some guidance from UIL that anticipates a September start for athletics. We're expecting further clarification for academic UIL, band, and other extra-curricular areas.

7. Will SSISD provide bus transportation?

Yes, SSISD will provide bus transportation for students engaged in at-school instruction. For purposes of social distancing, we encourage parents/guardians to bring their children to school if they are able.

8. Will students take STAAR/EOC exams in 2020-2021?

Yes, as of July 2020, The Texas Education Agency has indicated that testing will still occur during the 2020-2021 school year.

Virtual Learning Academy / At-Home Learning

1. Will SSISD allow my student to be educated at-home/virtually?

Yes, families may choose for their students to be educated via the SSISD Virtual Learning Academy beginning in the fall of 2020. The Academy is one of the two models SSISD is offering for school in the fall, and it will not require students to attend face-to-face instruction.

2. Can students who participate in the SSISD Virtual Learning Academy also participate in athletics, band, and other extracurricular activities?

Yes, students who are participating in the SSISD Virtual Learning Academy may also participate in extracurricular activities if they satisfy UIL requirements, are enrolled in the applicable course, and able to attend on-campus practices and competitions.

3. Will the Virtual Learning Academy be different from last spring's distance learning program?

Yes, the Academy is designed to be a long-term solution that will successfully guide students through a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum for the entire school year. Students will be required to participate in classes daily (five days per week), and it will entail a full course load of instruction. Grades and attendance will be taken.

4. Will there be an attendance requirement for the Academy?

Yes, Texas Education Agency rules require that students participate daily (five days per week) to be counted present each day. All traditional rules for truancy and attendance for credit/promotion will apply.

To be considered "present" for school each day students must either show progress electronically through the Academy's LMS (Learning Management System), show progress from teacher/student interaction that day, or successfully complete assignments that day.

5. What online LMS (Learning Management System) will my student use?

Students in Kindergarten through 5th grade will be served through SeeSaw, and students in 6th – 12th grades will be served through Microsoft Teams. Within each, SSISD will provide a variety of tools, lessons, practice, and interaction/feedback opportunities to ensure the academic integrity of the Virtual Learning Academy.

6. Will courses taken in the Virtual Learning Academy be included in GPA calculations and class rank for high school students?

Yes, courses taken through the Academy will be included in high school students' GPA calculation and class rank.

7. What will grades look like for the Academy?

Expectations for coursework and grading guidelines are the same for the Virtual Learning Academy and at-school instruction.

8. Will students have virtual access to their campus nurse and counselor if they choose the Virtual Learning Academy?

Yes, parents and students may contact the school counselor or nurse by phone or e-mail during school hours.

9. Will all courses be offered through the Academy?

Yes, all courses will be offered. However, there are some elective courses that may not be offered virtually due to the hands-on nature of the course.

10. Will dual credit and AP courses be offered?

Yes, both will be available. Students who are planning to take a dual credit course must enroll through Paris Junior College. Please contact your SSSS Counselor for questions.

Traditional At-School/Face-to-Face Learning

1. Will SSISD allow my student to return for at-school instruction?

Yes, families may choose for their students to be educated on campus via face-to-face instruction. This means that students will attend their campus five days per week for traditional instruction.

2. What will at-school instruction look like?

It will look very much like it would have prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with respect to class offerings, school activities, etc., except for the health and safety measures that SSISD will implement to provide the safest environment possible. Students will generally follow the same schedule they would have normally followed.

Health and Safety

1. How will SSISD keep students safe in face-to-face instruction?

SSISD is currently working on its plan to protect students during face-to-face instruction. The complete plan will be communicated publicly at least one week before school begins. The plan will have four primary parts:

- a. Providing Notice – SSISD will communicate plan details with all stakeholders
- b. Prevention – Practices to prevent the virus from entering the school
- c. Response – Practices to respond to a lab-confirmed case in a school
- d. Mitigation – Practices to reduce likely spread inside a school

Strategies to prevent and mitigate spread include but are not limited to training, hand-washing, face masks if required by our governor's executive order, social distancing where possible, etc.

2. Will SSISD Screen its staff?

Teachers and staff will self-screen each day, including taking their own temperature. Symptoms and/or COVID-19 diagnosis will result in entering the state's quarantine protocol.

3. Will SSISD screen its students?

Parents will screen students before they attend school each day. Symptoms and/or COVID-19 diagnosis will result in entering the state's quarantine protocol.

4. Will SSISD staff take my student's temperature?

Generally no, SSISD will not take students' temperatures each day. However, a student who exhibits symptoms at school will have his/her temperature taken and appropriate measures will be taken depending on the outcome.

5. Will face masks be required for students or staff?

SSISD will follow the governor's executive orders for requiring face masks when it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing from others. There are exceptions within the order including one that exempts children under 10 from having to wear a mask.

Outside of an executive order from the governor or a requirement from the Texas Education Agency, SSISD will not require face masks.

Students and staff will be permitted to wear face masks if they choose, even if not required.

6. What happens if a student or teacher tests positive for COVID-19? Will the entire classroom/campus have to quarantine?/ Will students be able to participate in at-home learning during the quarantine?

Students or staff who test positive for COVID-19 will be sent home to recover. When notification of a possible exposure occurs, in coordination with local health authorities, the District will conduct contact tracing. Based on the results, a determination will be made as

to which students meet the criteria for “close contact exposure” and must be quarantined. If students are required to temporarily quarantine, services will be provided through the Virtual Learning Academy.

7. What happens if my student’s campus is temporarily closed during the year?

A campus/school may be closed either by our governor’s executive order or by local decision for up to five days. During such a closure, the District may choose to serve all students via the Virtual Learning Academy or choose to make up the day either intra-school year or in late May/early June.